"Request for Proposals" at a Glance

Many of the enterprise contracts the Commonwealth seeks to establish for strategic goods and services can often only be provided through supplier agreements that are developed through competitive negotiations, which takes into account many of the variables and needs for innovative solutions, products, and services that emerge over the life of any long term contractual relationship, and where price is not the sole determining factor in a relationship.

As such, our Vendor community now has more opportunity to present comprehensive solutions to Virginia's statewide needs for the purchase of non-technology and non-professional goods and services.

Responding to Request for Proposals (RFP) requires a different approach then responding to Invitation for Bids (IFBs). Below is an overview of some of the benefits and differences. For more details on Competitive Negotiations and RFPs, be sure to review the <u>Virginia Vendors Manual</u> and carefully read the solicitations that are posted on <u>eVA VBO</u>.

What is Competitive Negotiation?

Pursuant to 2.2-4301, a competitive negotiation is a procurement method where a written Request For Proposal (RFP) is issued that describes in general terms what is to be procured, the criteria to be used in evaluating the proposal, and the applicable contractual terms and conditions, including any unique capabilities or qualifications required of the contractor.

What are some major differences between RFPs and IFBs?

IFBs	RFPs
Vendor referred to as Bidder	Vendor referred to as Offeror
Scope of Work describes the requirements in detail.	Statement of Needs describes the required outcomes. Process to reach the outcomes may not be defined.
Bids are submitted for a specific good or service	Proposals are submitted that describe the Offeror's approach to providing the good or service
Bids are accepted as is and must be responsive to all of the stated requirements	Proposals are negotiated based on the Offeror's submitted solution and the Commonwealth's needs
Quick turnaround time for award	More time required to evaluate proposals
Lowest responsive and responsible bid price is the determining factor for award	Evaluation criteria are used to rate and determine which proposal is most advantageous to Commonwealth.
Award is based on objective criteria	Award may based on subjective criteria reviewed and scored by Evaluation Committee

What are some of the benefits of RFPs?

During the RFP process vendors are expected to share their professional expertise about the goods or services the Commonwealth is seeking to procure.

Therefore vendors have the opportunity to:

- Share best practices based on their experience
- Craft a comprehensive solution around the Commonwealth's stated needs
- Drive profits by delivering more effective and efficient goods and services
- Deliver shared savings to the Commonwealth
- Include full spectrum of goods and services around a stated need
 - For example, instead of bidding on a commodity, vendors will submit a proposal for providing the commodity as well as potential maintenance services, consumables, and other supporting needs
- Innovate outcomes

Responding to RFPs (Tips):

- The "Statement of Need" is where the Commonwealth is describing the goods/services it wishes to procure. Read it closely.
- Carefully review the solicitation for the words must, shall, should, and may:
 - Must and shall identify requirements whose absence will have a major negative impact on the suitability of the proposed solution.
 - o **Should** and **may** indicate highly desirable processes, results, outcomes, or otherwise.
- Review the proposal preparation and submission section for detailed information on what needs to be submitted and in what format
- Proposals should be prepared simply and economically with emphasis on completeness and clarity of content.
- Review the evaluation criteria and make sure you are addressing the evaluation criteria in your response.
- Make sure you are meeting the requirements and expectations described in the solicitation. If you can exceed the expectations while providing cost savings through efficiencies or otherwise, that's good too.
- Submit your best proposal based on your professional experience providing the requested goods/services.
- Sign it!
- Assure delivery in advance of the close date and required time!